

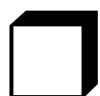
# Health Pathways

Newsletter of the Health Professions Career Opportunity Program

April 2000

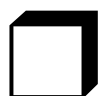
Volume 22, No.11

*In this issue...*



***Financing  
Medical Education***

Here are a few things that you might want to consider if you are thinking about pursuing a career in nursing.



***New Web Site***

Those who choose nursing as a career must remember that first and foremost they are providing a service for members of the general public who require help in promoting and maintaining health, care in illness, and support in death. To be intimately involved in people's lives when they are both healthy and ill is a privilege and an honor.



***Premed Timeline***



***Interviewing for  
Medical School***



***Renewal Notice***



***HCTP***

To be an excellent nurse, one must enjoy interacting with people and have a caring attitude. One must also want to be a lifelong learner, as new knowledge is constantly being generated in the field of health care. Flexibility and creativity are assets of benefit to nurses wherever they choose to work.

## Should I Become a Nurse?

A degree in nursing is one of the most marketable of the professional degrees. It is recognized in many countries throughout the world. The experiences of working with world renowned scholars and researchers in your discipline; of being exposed to a broad cross-section of



students from throughout the province and the world; and of being a part of the generation of new knowledge are only available in a university environment. Nursing education is designed to

equip the graduate with excellent communication skills, healthy living skills, organizational skills, and critical thinking skills. These skills are transferable to everything an individual might do in terms of family, volunteer, and work life.

*Source: University of Alberta home page [www.ua-nursing.ualberta.ca/nurse.html](http://www.ua-nursing.ualberta.ca/nurse.html)*



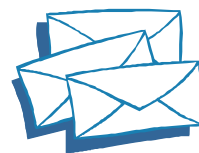
# On Investigating Financial Aid in Schools

The Director of the offices of Student Financial Management and Residency Planning and Practice Management at the Boston University Medical Center, offers the following advice to medical school applicants:

When you begin to investigate schools, ask the financial-aid officers these questions. (When you visit a school, arrange a meeting at the financial-aid office in advance.)

- 1) What is the budget for each class currently attending the school, and how does it break down?
- 2) What is the recent history of tuition increases, and are there any factors that are expected to change the trend?
- 3) What is the average indebtedness of your graduates, and what is the range of debts?
- 4) Is counseling on the management of my debt available as needed? (The best way to find this out is to visit.)
- 5) Does the school offer interest-free emergency loans to help me with my living expenses while I am waiting for disbursements of loans to arrive?
- 6) Is institutional financial assistance weighted toward scholarships, loans, or a combination of both?
- 7) Are my parent's income and assets used to determine my eligibility for financial assistance from the school? If so, under what circumstances is the information not required?
- 8) Would my eligibility for financial assistance from the school be modified if I elect an "alternate" curriculum track or have to retake courses (if such an option exists)?
- 9) Are there any special requirements for eligibility for financial assistance from the school? For example, am I required to borrow a minimum amount from outside sources before I am eligible for aid from the school?
- 10) What are the repayment terms for loans awarded as financial aid from the school? What is the interest rate? How long will I have to repay the debt?
- 11) Have any students withdrawn because of financial problems?

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(202) 828-0401.*



Do you have a story or suggestions for *Health Pathways*? We welcome your contributions. Mail us your ideas, letters, or articles today! Announcements of scheduled events need to be sent to us at least six months in advance to appear in the newsletter. Be sure to include your name and address on all correspondence. The Health Professions Career Opportunity Program retains the right to edit all materials. Contact us at:

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## **Health Pathways**

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## **Guest Articles**

Views of contributing writers do not necessarily reflect the policy of the department, agency, or administration. Letters to the editor are encouraged. Although we do not pay for guest articles, manuscripts are welcome. We reserve the right to edit all material.

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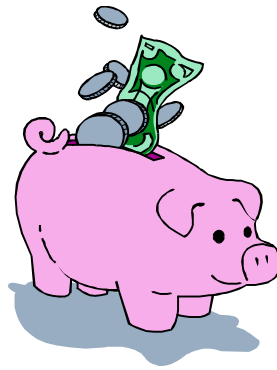
# Financing Medical Education: Do the Right Thing and Don't Quit!

*By Charles Terrell, Associate Dean, Student Affairs and Financial Aid, Boston University School of Medicine*

Financing medical education is an expensive thing to do. Moreover, it also involves a process that is frequently confusing and frustrating for applicants and their parents. After years of assisting health professional students finance their education, I'd like to offer a few time-honored words of advice on the subject. My general mantra, taken from *Financing Medical Education 1998-1999* (published by the National Association of Medical Minority Educators (NAMME)), encourages learning the intricacies of student higher educational financing, avoiding the avoidable pitfalls, and acting responsibly — in short, “Doing the right thing”.

The burden of meeting costs rests with students and their families. Universities assume the burden of assistance, providing the difference between what students and families are able to pay and the actual cost of attendance. Prudent management is the key to your financial survival and well being throughout health professions education. You must plan, budget, and above all, read. Read...[all] relevant student assistance materials available. The better you plan, budget, and read, the better your health professions institution will be able to help meet your financial needs. “I’m a medical student, I don’t have time” is an unacceptable attitude.

Take a global approach to financing a health professions education. Research financial options — traditional aid, Armed Forces and the National Health Service Corps, extended family assistance, and loan repayment programs. Shop around for the best educational programs and create a financing grid which will assist in understanding educational and financing options. Remember that neither the cost of tuition nor the total cost of education is the most important cost factor. The cost of the money borrowed is of greater consequence.



Also, take an integrated approach to personal finance which involves goal setting, goal attainment planning, and re-evaluation and revision of these goals and plans. The key is for each individual to evaluate carefully where he/she is today, in terms of finances; to define where he/she wants to be in the future; and to develop a plan to get there. And remember, for any given student at a specific school, with

specific earnings and outlooks, there may be a threshold beyond which debt is not manageable and hence unreasonable. For each of these calculations, choices, and perceptions, there are transitions which occur over time, and thus requires a recalculation of debt threshold at different points in time.

Finally, do not hesitate to contact each health professions institution personally as the institutions should serve as your most important informational and counseling tool.

More specifically, financial resources to pay for medical education come from a variety of sources:

- You
- Your parent(s)
- Private service obligation scholarship programs (you apply on your own)
- National service-obligations scholarship programs (you apply on your own)
- Federal low-interest loans (awarded by the school)
- Need-based federal loans
- Non-need-based federal loans
- State scholarship programs
- Private foundation, independent organizational scholarship programs
- Work
- Work-study
- Other

(See *Financing* on page 6)

# Jump Start Your Professional Nursing Career

## What Can You Do To Jump-Start Your Professional Nursing Career?

You need **COMPASSION** to be a good nurse.

You need **TECHNICAL SKILLS** to be a good nurse.

You need an in-depth **SCIENTIFIC** and **LIBERAL EDUCATION** to be a good nurse.

You need a lot of **HEART** to be a **GREAT** nurse!

Volunteering and community service will increase your self-esteem and teach you to appreciate the simple joys of life. It also gives you hands-on experience with the nursing profession and the health care industry.

### ***Hospital Volunteer***

Most hospitals have volunteer programs that enable participants to experience various areas of the hospital — from emergency room to intensive care to pediatrics to physical therapy.

### ***Home Health Care***

During the last decade, more sick people have been cared for in their own homes. Often, these “patients” need a visiting nurse or home health care service to provide for their advanced medical needs. Volunteers help with small tasks, like reading to a patient. This is a great way to experience the special relationships that form between patients and caregivers.

(See *Nursing* on page 12)

## New Web Site

The Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHDP) has created a new web site, offering more resources and information for people to access. Included in the web site are links to pertinent information for students interested in pursuing a health career. Current and back issues of the *Health Pathways* Newsletter are one of the resources which students and others can view over the internet. In addition, there is information relevant to the Health Careers Training Project (HCTP) as well as Rural Health and much more. The publications produced by the Health Professions Career Opportunity Program (HPCOP) will soon be available through the new web site. In the meantime, if you are interested in a publication please write, call, fax, or e-mail us at:

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Although the contracting period for this year has passed, in the future, the Request For Proposal (RFP) will be available under Grants and Scholarships in the new web site. In addition, sometime in July, the contract awards for this year will be listed.

If you are interested in viewing the new web site, the address is:

**[www.oshpd.state.ca.us/](http://www.oshpd.state.ca.us/)**

In order to get to HPCOP and the *Health Pathways* newsletter from the home page, you can click on Health Manpower and again on Health Professions Development. Or, if you prefer, you can get a direct link to HPCOP and the Health Pathways by typing in the address:

**[www.oshpd.state.ca.us/pcrcd/professions/hpcop.htm](http://www.oshpd.state.ca.us/pcrcd/professions/hpcop.htm)**

# Premed Timeline: Plan Your Success!

*Douglas P. Merrill, Ph.D., Premedical Advisor, Rochester Institute of Technology*

It is important for you to understand that there is no single “right” way to prepare for medical school. Your goal should be to discover the way that is best for you — the one that allows you to demonstrate your full potential. The best advice we can give you is to begin working with a premedical advisor as soon as you can. Together, you can craft and customize a premedical career that is appropriate for you.

To be a successful premedical student, you must be aware of what medical schools are looking for in a successful applicant. They want to see evidence of:

- High scholastic achievement in college coursework and on the MCAT.
- A clear understanding of what is involved in being a doctor.
- An ability to work as a member of a team, to be a leader, to manage time effectively, and to prioritize.
- Genuine concern for the welfare of others.
- High moral character, integrity, honesty and humility.

As you organize your premedical career, keep these things in mind and try to structure your activities accordingly. Also be sure to consider your own background, skills, outside interests and commitments when you plan your curriculum. Using this timeline, you complete all of the requirements for

medical school admission, graduate, and then begin your medical school training immediately after earning your degree. However, this may not be the timeline that is best for you. Another option is to take a full four years, or even more, to complete all of the premedical requirements and to apply later, after earning the degree. You can then spend a valuable year or more after college engaged in a number of rewarding work, study or volunteer activities. This extra time may make you an even stronger candidate.



## Freshman Year

### *Fall*

Consult with your premedical advisor prior to selecting courses. In most cases, you should enroll in at least one of the basic science courses required for medical school admission — typically biology and/or general chemistry. Although you must take science coursework to be eligible to apply to medical school, keep in mind that you do not need to be a science major.

Join clubs such as a premed science club and others that relate to medicine and science. Participate in both minority and non-minority clubs; this allows for both support systems and greater exposure to the diversity of a college campus.

Develop good study habits. If you need help, see your professors, academic advisors, or members of the counseling center. They are there to help you succeed.

Start to think about what you want to do for the summer. Investigate opportunities to do research, work in a health care setting, or participate in special summer programs.

### *Spring*

This will be a continuation of what you began during the fall semester. Continue your relevant coursework and your involvement in extracurricular activities, and continue to consult your advisor.

Start to finalize your plans for summer. Check out the deadlines, complete applications, and make arrangements for necessary letters of recommendation. Do not procrastinate, or opportunities will pass you by.

If you are not doing as well as you would like, discuss some options with your advisor, such as summer school or meeting regularly with a tutor. The transition from

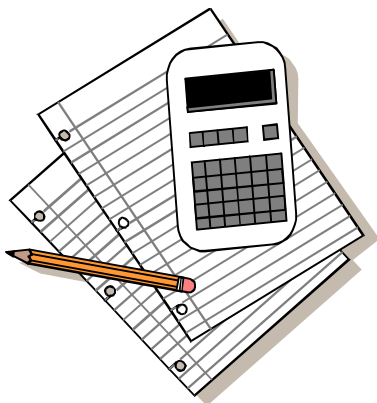
(See **Timeline** on page 11)



(*Financing*, from page 3)

Many medical schools will expect you to borrow a significant percentage of your financial obligation from a variety of sources. Therefore, remember that most loans require a good credit record. If your credit is not good, and you are not approved for an institutionally recommended loan, you may not be allowed to matriculate, at the institution of your choice, until your credit problems have been solved. Some common reasons why your student loan application may be denied include:

- You have multiple loans that have been 30 days delinquent.
- You have been 60 days delinquent on more than 3 loans in the past 2 years.
- You have been 90 days delinquent on 1 loan in the past 5 years.
- You have more than 3 inquiries on your credit report in the last 6 months (inquiries result when you apply for loans and credit cards).
- You have multiple open credit cards; even if the balance is \$0, your school loans may be denied.
- You enter school with a high level of consumer debt, such that total indebtedness reaches a level that triggers certain restrictions on student loans.



You may obtain a copy of your credit record (possibly for a small fee) from one of the following credit bureau agencies. Many people have errors in their records, so be sure to look over it carefully!

CBI-Equifax, PO Box 10S873,  
Atlanta, GA 30348,  
1(800) 685-1111

Trans Union Credit Information  
Co.  
PO Box 390, Springfield, PA  
19064-0390,  
(316) 636-6100

Experian Attn: NCAC,  
PO Box 949,  
Allen, TX 75013-0949,  
1(800) 392-0949

So, if you currently have any credit problems, resolve them now! Make payment arrangements with your creditors, get written confirmation of the arrangements, keep cancelled checks, and stick to the agreements you make. You will need to provide lenders with copies of all documentation when you enter school.

And, if you have good credit now, keep it that way! Don't open more than one credit card account, and use it only for emergencies. Close all other credit card accounts. Do not borrow money in any form unless it is absolutely necessary. Make an effort to be on time on every payment you are required to make — one forgotten obligation can make the difference in your ability to attend school.

As you think about higher education for your future, keep these financial issues in mind: Debt is not a "bad" thing in and of itself. It only becomes a detriment if you mismanage it, or if you borrow

beyond your ability to repay. Debt can help you achieve your dreams; without it, you may not be able to reach your professional goals.

Financial planning is most effective when it is done early. If you begin to learn now about the possible financial issues on the horizon, you will increase your future control over your finances by ten-fold. If you wait until the end of your senior year in college to think about how you will meet your expenses in medical school, your options will be severely limited.

Most people avoid thinking about the financial requirement of attending school because they are scared or confused about it. But, with little research, you can be informed. With knowledge comes confidence. In summary: plan, explore all possible options, keep good records, understand your financial-aid package, work closely with your financial-aid office, do not become frightened or overwhelmed by your financial situation, utilize all available resources, read all available literature, budget, update your budget, submit materials on time, and reapply every year.

Remember, when you do not understand, need help, are worried, frustrated, or upset, ask questions. Also minimize debt where possible; utilize it when necessary.

Finally, whether it be studying for the MCAT, applying to medical school, or trying to finance your higher education — don't quit.

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**Kevin Harris, *The Road MMEP***  
*(Volume 2, No. 6) Fall 1998,*  
*2450 N. Street, N.W., Washington D.C.*  
*20037-1127.*  
*(202) 828-0401.*

### Remote Site Education Program

The Health Careers Training Project (HCTP) is currently working closely with the Community Colleges' Regional Health Occupation Resource Centers (RHORC) who share a common goal of addressing the current and future training and employment needs of California's health care industry. Current projects being developed in the rural health care arena by the HCTP and RHORC are:

#### Remote Site Training Centers

HCTP is currently working with the RHORC and California State Rural Health Association (CSRHA) to set up Remote Site Training Centers located in rural hospitals throughout California. These sites, once completed, will be linked to all Community Colleges throughout the State via high speed teleconference lines as part of the telemedicine network. The health care provider can then contract to any Community College throughout the State for appropriate training of their staff. This program will help recruit and train entry level staff, train existing employees into new positions, give Continuing Education Units (CEU) required for professional licensing, and create true "career path training" to help retain existing employees at the facility.

An example of a Remote Site Education Program is at the John C. Fremont Hospital in rural Mariposa County. This pilot project will help Fremont Hospital recruit, train, and retain allied health workers by offering a "career path" with true advancement potential for people in the Mariposa area transitioning off public assistance. Along the way, the project will work with Allied Health Instructional Staff at Merced Community College, and incorporate current teleconferencing technology at a remote site education center. The end result will be a cutting-edge project capable of replication in any rural area with limited resources, a need for health care workers, and unemployed or underemployed residents interested in a health care career.

The Fremont Hospital program will recruit local residents to be trained onsite as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA). Training will be provided by instructional staff from Merced Junior College. The program will begin in March 2000 and instructors from the college will actually come to the hospital to provide the training. Ultimately, Fremont will put in a broad bandwidth communications line to allow for remote educational video conferencing, sparing the

instructor and students their commute.

Certainly, other health facilities have used the "grow your own" strategy to aid in recruitment and retention efforts. However, the Fremont program envisions adding some "career path" training components that will keep the CNAs on staff for some time. The CNAs, who would like to move up instead of on, will eventually be able to participate in onsite Licensed Vocational Nurse education and eventually in a Registered Nurse training program. Given the legislative mandate to increase the RN to patient ratio in two years, and the current shortage of RN's throughout California, this program, when fully implemented, will be especially timely.



(See *Remote Site* on page 10)

*As part of the Health Careers Training Program's attempt to provide you with information regarding allied health occupations, each issue will focus on at least one allied health profession, and will include specific information regarding: job duties, working conditions, employment trends, salaries, entrance requirements, and advancement opportunities.*

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# RADIATION THERAPISTS

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## THE JOB

**RADIATION THERAPISTS**, also called Radiation Therapy Technologists, administer radiation treatments to cancer patients. They operate a variety of sophisticated machines, such as linear accelerators and cobalt units, which generate X-rays, gamma rays, electron beams, and other types of radiation. Radiation therapy is based on the premise that cancer cells are typically more sensitive than normal cells to radiation's destructive effects. By focusing powerful beams of radiation precisely on the abnormal cells, the tumor can be partly or completely destroyed without permanently damaging the surrounding normal tissues.

Before therapy begins, the physician (radiation oncologist) prepares a detailed, long-term treatment plan, customized to the individual patient's condition and anatomy. Radiation Therapists, working closely with the physician and others on the therapy team, help to develop this plan. Preliminary steps in treatment planning include internal imaging to pinpoint the exact location of the cancer, measuring the patient's body contours, and using this information to develop cross-sectional diagrams of the affected area. Then, computers are used to find the best combination of beam angle, size, and distance that will achieve the desired result with fewest undesirable side-effects. Although most

Radiation Therapists are involved in at least some phases of treatment planning, a small number, known as Dosimetrists, specialize in this aspect of the work, which often involves complex mathematical calculations and multiple correlations.

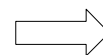


The length and frequency of radiation treatments varies among cancer patients. Radiation Therapists handle most treatment sessions on their own, under the general direction of the patient's physician and in accordance with the long-term treatment plan. When conducting daily therapy sessions, therapists first review treatment procedures with the patient, answering questions and providing needed reassurance and physical help. After setting up the radiation-producing equipment and positioning the patient as specified in the treatment plan, the technologist adjusts the controls and, in compliance with established

worker safety requirements, operates the equipment from an adjoining room. During treatment, therapists constantly monitor the patient's condition through windows or closed-circuit TV monitors. Should any unexpected or adverse reactions occur, they must be prepared to turn the equipment off and provide immediate assistance. Then, exercising independent judgment, they must decide whether to call medical or nursing personnel.

As part of their job, Radiation Therapists maintain detailed records of all therapy sessions, noting on the patient's chart such information as the area treated, the radiation dosage, equipment control settings, the patient's reactions, and the total amount of radiation received to date. These charts are frequently reviewed by clinical (radiation) physicists, Dosimetrists, and physicians.

Although most radiation therapy involves transmission of radiation from an external source to the cancer site (teletherapy), some cancer treatment involves implantation of radioactive material directly on or into the affected body part (brachytherapy). Brachytherapy is a surgical procedure only performed by doctors. However, therapists assist by storing, sterilizing, or preparing the special applicators containing the radioactive substance for the physician to implant.

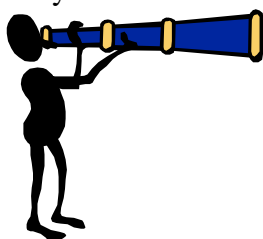




## WORKING CONDITIONS

Radiation Therapists generally work in large, hospital-based or independent cancer treatment centers, located in metropolitan areas. Some Dosimetrists work for computerized treatment planning services which handle treatment plan calculations for hospitals that do not have their own staff Dosimetrists.

Considerable standing, walking, lifting, and moving of patients are required on the job. Because of the presence of radiation-producing equipment and radioactive materials, Radiation Therapists wear special badges to monitor radiation exposure while in the radiation therapy area. Adherence to safety programs and procedures, as well as built-in safety devices, keep radiation exposure within established safety levels.



## EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

The following information is from the California Projections of Employment published by the Employment Development Department's Labor Market Information Division.

|                                      |       |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Estimated number of workers in 1993: | 2,070 |
| Estimated number of workers in 2005: | 3,290 |
| Projected Growth 1993-2005           | 59%   |

Estimated openings due to separations by 2005 490  
(These figures do not include self-employment or openings due to turnover.)

Employment for Radiation Therapists is expected to grow faster than average through 2005. Such job opportunities are a result of the growth in health care industries and new uses of diagnostic imaging and therapeutic technology. Also, more treatment of cancer is anticipated due to the aging population, efforts toward early detection, and improved ability to detect cancer through radiological procedures.

## WAGES, HOURS, AND FRINGE BENEFITS

Wages for Radiation Therapists vary based on experience and job location. The median wage reported is \$22.62 per hour. Dosimetrists usually earn about fifteen percent more than general Radiation Therapists.

The regular work week is 40 hours, five days a week. Unlike many hospital workers, Radiation Therapists usually work day shift only.

## ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS AND TRAINING

Radiation Therapists must be licensed by the State Department of Health Services. Requirements include the completion of a State-approved radiation therapy training program and the passage of a written examination. Successful candidates receive the title, "Certified Radiologic Technologist" (CRT). Those who also pass the certification exam given by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT) may use the designation, "Registered Radiation Therapy Technologist."

Radiation therapy training programs are conducted by community colleges, universities, and hospitals throughout Califor-

nia. Most programs last two years. However, persons with prior training in related fields, such as diagnostic radiological technology or nursing, may be able to complete the program in one year. In all programs, classroom instruction is supplemented by clinical experience in one or more hospital. Most schools have many more applicants than they can accept. Prospective students are expected to have a strong background in the physical and biological sciences and in mathematics (including algebra and geometry). Extensive use of computers and sophisticated machines necessitates in-depth computer technology training for Radiation Therapists.

Many Radiation Therapists view their work as a "helping" occupation, similar to teaching or social work. Because they work with patients who are gravely ill and often under stress, therapists must display emotional strength, empathy, and patience. They must be able to maintain pleasant, positive relationships with their patients on a long-term basis. Radiation Therapists must be able to interact effectively with physicians and with the therapy team when developing plans of treatment.

## ADVANCEMENT

Experienced, well-qualified therapists can become supervisors or, possibly, managers of the radiation therapy department. Therapists who earn teaching credentials may qualify as training instructors, clinical coordinators, or directors. Those who have strong mathematical aptitude and interest, and who complete additional training, may become Dosimetrists.

(See *Radiation* on next page)

(*Radiation*, from previous page)

## FINDING THE JOB

Students whose performance is superior during the clinical portion of their training may be hired after graduation by the hospital in which they trained. School instructors may refer qualified graduates to other jobs. Additional information regarding openings can be obtained from the American Society of Radiologic Technologists webpage. However, job seekers need not wait for openings to be advertised; they should also file applications directly with employers for future consideration.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SOURCES

Department of Health Services  
Radiologic Health Branch Certification  
601 North 7th Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 445-0931  
If mailing, send to:  
Mail Station 178  
PO Box 942732  
Sacramento, CA 94234-7320

Radiological Society of Northern America  
2021 Spring Road, Suite 600  
Oak Brook, IL 60523-1860  
(630) 571-2670  
[www.rsna.org/](http://www.rsna.org/)

American Society of Radiologic Technologists  
15000 Central Avenue Southeast  
Albuquerque, NM 87123-3917  
(505) 298-4500  
[www.asrt.org/](http://www.asrt.org/)

*Source: State of California, Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division, Information Services Group, (916) 262-2162.*

(*Remote Site*, from page 7)

The allied health workers, seeking additional onsite education, will continue working several days per week and will also be paid for the days they spend in class. The hospital will control the structure of the training program through the Community Colleges, and the programs will be developed on site. It will also generate targets for the program — those employees who might make good candidates for such training opportunities.

The HCTP also helps with that all-important task of finding the funds necessary to complete the project. Whether from the Federal Health Resources Service Administration, JTPA/WIA, Community College funds, Healthcare Association, or private grants, we “tailor” a program to meet our customer’s needs. The John C. Fremont Hospital Project is only one of the several projects, already operational or under development, on which the HCTP is working.

*Source: Garth Fryer, OSHPD Staff*



(*Timeline*, from page 5)

high school to college can be tough! Under no circumstances does this mean you cannot become a physician!

The first summer is often a good time to regroup after your first year of college. Most students will be involved in some type of employment situation, which is good. Employment helps the financial situation, but as importantly, it promotes the development of other attributes such as teamwork, time management, responsibility, and reliability.

Consider doing some volunteer work during your free time. Do something to give yourself exposure to the health profession, or something to benefit your community. This may be a good opportunity to spend some time with a medical practitioner. This “shadowing” experience will give you a good idea of at least one type of medical practice.

## Sophomore Year

### Fall

Check in with your premedical and academic advisors as soon as you return. Make sure that the curriculum you have selected is appropriate. It should be challenging, but also interesting and enjoyable. Continue your basic science coursework with such courses as organic chemistry and/or physics. Remain involved in extracurricular activities. Consider leadership roles within these organizations. Again, give some thought to the coming summer. This may be a good time to consider a research position, particularly if you are interested in MD/PhD degree

programs. There are many different programs that are designed to meet specific student needs. You must decide which one is right for you. Do you need an enrichment program (for advanced students) or a remedial program (to help reinforce the basic science courses)? There are also programs that are strictly research-based or provide MCAT preparation.

### Spring

Continue with the course requirements for your degree program and continue to complete the basic premedical courses. Submit all applications for summer programs or employment positions. Meet those deadlines!

### Summer

Whether you participate in a special program, conduct research, or work at a job for money, continue to explore the entire field of medicine. Read as much as you can. Talk with people and shadow physicians. Volunteer your time, and discover the benefits of helping others. In between all that, get some rest! You are about to enter the most challenging year of your undergraduate career.

## Junior Year

### Fall

As before, check in with your advisors and assure yourself that you are on the right track with your education. Make sure that you understand how the medical school application process works at your school.

Continue with the completion of the premedical course requirements. By the end of this year, you should have taken full-year courses in biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics.

You will take the MCAT in April of this year, so begin preparing for it. Ask your advisor if your school offers an MCAT preparation course. If not, commercial courses are available. A “prep” course may help develop your test-taking skills and will help you become familiar with the exam. Some programs offer scholarships or discounts.

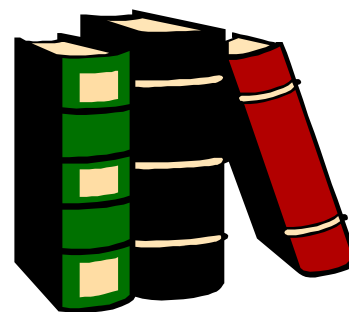
Continue your participation in extracurricular activities. Hopefully you are honing your leadership skills through these activities.

Contact and get information from schools to which you are interested in applying. Schedule meetings with medical school admissions personnel that visit your school, and consider attending special programs offered by local or regional medical schools for minority students.

Start making decisions about the type of medical school you want to attend:

- What region of the country
- Size of school
- Minority makeup
- Faculty/student ratio
- Curriculum-traditional or problem-based learning style

As before, consider all of the options for summer work and begin making preparations.



(See *Timeline* on next page)

(*Timeline*, from previous page)

## Spring

If you have completed the required coursework and are prepared, take the MCAT examination in April. Have your scores sent to the institutions to which you are applying. If you are not ready, either because you haven't completed the courses or because you haven't studied enough, you can take the exam in August. Meet with your advisor to begin preparing your application. The process differs from school to school, but, at the very least, you will be required to submit an application, transcripts, MCAT scores, and letters of recommendation.

Visit schools, if possible, and talk with minority affairs officers, minority students, and admissions deans if you can.

## Summer

While working or participating in summer programs, you will also be working on your medical school application. Most schools will not accept applications until June 1. There is some advantage to filing early, so do not procrastinate. Have transcripts sent to AMCAS (make sure you know the deadlines), or if required, directly to the school.

Pay attention to fee waivers. If you are eligible for a fee waiver from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AMCAS), you are probably eligible for a fee waiver from those institutions to which you are applying for the secondary application. If you are unsure, ask.

Study over the summer if you are retaking the MCAT.

## Senior Year Fall

With the guidance of your advisor, carefully plan the final year of your undergraduate career. Consider taking biochemistry or other advanced science courses that will be valuable to you as a medical student.

Prepare to go on interviews. Find out if your school offers practice interviews (dress rehearsals), and use them to improve your interviewing skills.

Make sure you have a suit that is appropriate for an interview. Casual attire is not recommended.

This is your final year in college. You know the ropes, and you are in position to be a positive role model for younger students. Be a leader. Be a mentor. Share what you have learned with others.

## Spring

Complete your final course requirements and prepare for graduation. Do not skip commencement exercises. This is a time to be proud of your accomplishments and to reflect on all of your experiences.

## Summer

Consider employment on campus as a tutor as an option to regular employment. Obtaining employment the summer before entering medical school may be factored into your financial aid package. Also, this is a good way to reinforce your academic skills and knowledge base.

Enjoy yourself! Travel, if possible. Relax! Do something you always wanted to try. Have fun.

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Kevin Harris, The Road MMEP  
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(*Nursing*, from page 4)

## Extended Care Facility (ECF)

Formerly known as nursing homes, ECFs fulfill residents' basic needs and medical requirements. Since residents also need contact with the outside world, most ECFs provide a variety of extracurricular activities. From chair aerobics to singing to adopt-a-pet programs, volunteers are always needed.

## What else can you do?

Look around your community. Do you see people who need help? Don't be afraid to get involved. Community service is an important part of your future success, no matter what career you choose. Talk to as many nurses and health care professionals as possible. Interview them for a school report or ask if you can observe them on-the-job for a day. There may even be mentoring programs already set up through your school.

*Source: Purdue University.  
[www.nursing.purdue.edu/  
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jump%20start.htm](http://www.nursing.purdue.edu/jump%20start/jump%20start.htm)*



# Interviewing for Medical School: A perspective from both sides of the table.

By Jeannine C. Wills, MSIV

## Before The Interview:

**A. Find out about the school.** Knowledge of the program you are applying to demonstrates interest and will help you find out what you are getting into!

1. Read the packet the school sent you. Get a feel for what the school is like and what certain programs the school is known for.
2. Talk to students, admission officers, and professors if possible.
3. Get on the INTERNET! Most, if not all, schools have web pages where you can find valuable information. There are also some class/med school organization web pages that can be helpful to your investigation.

4. Answer for yourself the following questions:

*What contribution can you make to this school?*

*Why is this school suited to you?*

**B. Know Thyself.** Write out answers to the following questions and PRACTICE! Videotape yourself if you are so inclined:

1. *Why do I want to be a doctor?*

Bad Answer: I had a sick relative.

Good Answer: Through my extensive research and clinical experience in the medical field (give examples) I have come to the conclusion that medicine is the only career for me. It is OK to have a sick relative spark the interest, but this had better not be the only thing!

2. *What was my research all about?*

Write out and practice a summary of your research. Make it basic, relevant and to the point. Keep in mind that your interviewer most likely does not know the details of your research field, so try to make it sound relevant and like you played a relevant role (yes, literature searches are relevant). Do not bore a busy interviewer with details of the agar plates, unless they ask!! Do a quickie medline search on your topic to update yourself on the recent happenings in your area. You will look like a star when you say “the other literature on this topic shows...”

3. *What did I get out of my volunteer experience?*

Be prepared to give specifics. Doctor/patient interaction is of course preferable to pushing carts! Do not stress number of hours (unless it is VERY high!)

4. *What are my strengths and weaknesses?*

Good generic strengths: organized, a leader, hard worker, people oriented, sense of humor, creativity, confidence, compassion.

Be sure to pick weaknesses that are not major character flaws and cannot be repaired (such as laziness!) Cliché: Perfectionist (!) No one buys it. Others: works too hard, too involved with patients. In a pinch, try humor: “I can’t swim” or “I like occasional cigars” if your interviewer appears to have a sense of humor!

Now you are ready to do mock interviews. It will reduce your stress level to have practiced in a nonjudgmental setting. Have your interviewer be as hard on you as possible.



(See *Interview* on next page)



## During The Interview:

### A. *Practice Considerations.*

1. Dress/Appearance: THINK DOCTOR! No, not plaid golf pants and bad shoes, but clothing that does not make you stand out as anything other than neat, conservative, and well groomed. Men: standard suit and tie, cut your goldilocks, and leave your earrings/nose ring at home! Women: may wear a skirt, but make sure it is not more than a little above the knee. Use muted makeup colors, small jewelry, have short, clean nails, and NO BIG HAIR. Preferably, no perfume or cologne. Try not to make fashion statements, they will be lost on that 60-year-old interviewer who has lived in the hospital for the past 20 years.
2. Arrive early.
3. Pay attention to your behavior. Interact with the other students. You are being observed! One of the questions on our interview report is regarding interview behavior. Are you fidgety, nervous, antisocial, etc?

**B. Bring samples of your work.** That way, you can offer the interviewer a copy of your publication or any other amazing work that they can remember you by.

### C. *Be enthusiastic.*

1. Be enthusiastic about yourself (if you are not, who will be?)
2. About the school — the interviewers are a part of the school and may take it personally if you don't seem interested!
3. Explain all about your experiences (research, clinical, etc.) and how it has framed your decision to come to medical school. In other words, know yourself and why you are here. If you don't know why you are here, that could be a problem. Med school is no joke and neither is being a doctor.
4. What else about you makes you unique? You have coached little league, you have great leadership experience, you travel, you support your family. The unique aspects of you or your work is what interviewers tend to remember most.

### D. *Interview the Interviewer.*

1. Always have questions to ask at the end. Spontaneous ones are better, but canned ones will do in a pinch: What is your typical day like? Are you happy here? What kind of clinical training opportunities are available for first and second years? Have you had time to do research? Are grants available for student initiated research?

### E. *Last Minute thoughts:*

1. KNOW deep down that you can do it, and that you will make a compassionate motivated physician.
2. RELAX. Have a sense of humor. If you don't have one, then at least SMILE and be pleasant.
3. KNOW that most interviewers WANT to write you a good report.

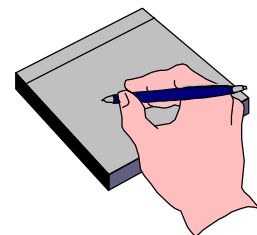
## After The Interview:

**A. Write a personal thank you note.**

**B. Deliver it ASAP.** It shows your consideration and interest, and it may get there before the report is written, leaving a final favorable impression.

**C. Follow up with the school** by telephone or in person if you are very interested.

*Source: UC Irvine Medical School Reapplicant*



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